Office Updates: Covid-19

Our office continues to follow both the county and state guidelines in regards to the health and safety of the community. With limitations on group sizes and rules regarding social distancing, most of our workshops and events have unfortunately been cancelled. However, we’ve been working diligently to bring you virtual options, that resident’s can enjoy and learn from in the safety and comfort of their home.

We are disappointed to announce that our annual meeting has been cancelled. With the large number of people who attend and the importance of social distancing, we felt it unsafe to expose everyone unnecessarily to the potential risks of this illness. This year we have elections for two open positions on our board of supervisors, for more information on how voting will be handled, please see our election guidelines on page 2.

As most are unsure of the specifics or amount of time we will have our office doors closed, please know that we are available via email butlerswcd@butlercountyohio.org as well as phone 513-887-3720. If you have questions or need assistance please contact us.

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance and property visits remain as they have these past few months. If you have a question about drainage, invasive species, erosion or other issues, call 513-887-3720 or email smithbe@butlercountyohio.org. We are limiting face to face interaction as much as we possibly can by doing technical visits on private property alone or by following social distancing guidelines, as well as wearing a mask, for the safety of not only our employees but also the residents.

If you feel more comfortable sending a detailed email with photographs, our specialists will either make a recommendation on what has been provided or will schedule an in-person visit.

Educational Assistance

As fall is quickly approaching, so is the beginning of the school year. While it is not clear on how the opening of school districts will look, our staff has moved forward with creating more virtual options, including virtual presentations and Q&A sessions for students. We will also continue to have other resources, such as lesson kits, that can be borrowed for use.

If you are an educator and would like to schedule a virtual presentation or to request a lesson kit, please reach out to our Education Specialist, Lynn White.

You can contact Lynn through her email whitelr@butlercountyohio.org or reach her via phone at 513-785-6666.

Please also see www.butlerswcd.org/onlineeducationresources
2020 Butler SWCD Supervisor Elections

Ohioans entrust soil and water conservation district Supervisors with some of the state’s most precious assets—our natural resources. A Supervisor’s primary responsibility is to ensure that the community uses its natural resources wisely, with an eye towards the future. In order to be an effective board member Supervisors must play an important role in how the community deals with a wide variety of resource management issues, including water quality, drainage, and soil erosion.

By voting, residents are given a voice in deciding who they believe will work towards setting overall policy and long-term objectives based on current local resource issues.

Who Can Vote?

To be eligible to vote residents must be at least 18 years old and reside within the County. Due to new rules in place we no longer require an affidavit on file with Butler SWCD attesting the eligibility of Firms, corporations, LLCs, trust, and non-residents that own land or occupy lands in Butler County; by signing the ballot you are verifying you legally are 18 years or older and eligible to vote as a non-resident landowner, a representative of the identified firm, corporation, LLC, or trust.

Election Legal Notice

The Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission will cause an election of Supervisors of the Butler Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to be held in accordance with Chapter 940 of the Ohio Revised Code. Individuals who own or occupy land within the Butler Soil and Water Conservation District and are 18 years of age or older may vote for Supervisor.

There are 2 ways an eligible voter can cast a ballot:
1.) At the SWCD office from August 19 until September 1 during normal business hours; or
2.) Voting absentee from July 20 until September 1, by requesting the ballot application and election ballot from SWCD office at the following address 1802 Princeton Road, Suite 300, Hamilton, Ohio 45011, by calling 513-887-3720, or email butlerswcd@butlercountyohio.org. Absentee ballots must be received by the SWCD office by September 1.

Two Supervisors will be elected to a three-year term commencing January 1, 2021 and ending December 31, 2023.

Nominees are:
1. David Brate
2. Jeremy Fruth
3. Drew Johnson

Absentee Ballot Request

Butler County residents or non-residents, Firms, corporations, LLCs, and trusts that own land or occupy lands in Butler County can vote absentee by mail or in person. Absentee ballots and ballot envelopes can be mailed to voters from July 20 until September 1 after requested by:
1. Mail—1802 Princeton Road, Suite 300, Hamilton, Ohio 45011
2. Phone— Call 513-887-3720
3. Electronically— email at Butlerswcd@butlercountyohio.org
4. In Person— 1802 Princeton Road, Suite 300, Hamilton, Ohio 45011
Board Responsibilities
The five member board of supervisors is responsible for developing and administering the conservation assistance programs offered through the Butler Soil and Water Conservation District and conducted in Butler County. They are public officials, serving without pay, responsible to the people of the district and state.

The term of current Supervisors, David Brate and Jeremy Fruth, will be expiring on December 31, 2020.

Candidates:

**David R. Brate**, a resident of Milford Township, is seeking re-election as a Supervisor of the Butler Soil and Water Conservation District, of which he currently serves as chairman. David is a graduate of The Ohio State University with a B.S. degree in Agricultural Economics; he founded Brate & Co. in 1979, and works with farm properties located throughout Ohio. His professional service includes real estate management, leasing, sales, appraisal, and consultation. Furthermore, he is a licensed real estate broker. Continued education and experience have enabled him to testify as an expert witness in Common Pleas Court and Federal Bankruptcy Court. He has served as President of the Ohio Chapter of Professional Farm Managers & Rural Appraisers.

David has lobbied local and state elected officials and has made presentations advocating for the conservation of natural resources. David’s interest and passion are to effectively educate, promote, and implement wiser conservation practices in order to protect land and water for generations to come.

In the past Jeremy has helped lead our county’s FFA soils judging competition, and is currently an adult advisor for the Butler County Junior Fair Board. Jeremy would appreciate the opportunity to again serve as a supervisor on the board. Having worked for Soil and Water from 2007—2010, he understands the conservation issues that the agricultural and urban communities face in Butler County, and hopes to continue offering his guidance and assistance with these issues.

**Drew Johnson**, a resident of Hanover Township, has been a lifelong farmer with his grandfather Wayne, and father Bill Johnson. After Talawanda High School, he graduated from Miami University in 2006. Drew currently works for Apple Farm Service Inc. in farm equipment sales.

In 2009, Drew and his wife Ashley began providing beef directly to customers from their family farm in Reily, under the name, Reserve Run Family Farm. In 2017, they purchased a farm in Hanover Township, where they focus on the integration of regenerative agriculture practice into all aspects of their farm. Their goal is to be good stewards of their land by cycling carbon throughout the year, providing better water infiltration, and lower surface water runoff. In 2019, Reserve Run Family Farm was awarded a Conservation Stewardship Grant to further implement those practices. Reserve Run hosted Butler County Farm Day in 2019 and also was awarded the Joe Dudley Outstanding Conservationist award.

As a board member, Drew will focus his decisions through a lens of good land stewardship and responsible practices for the best outcome for local landowners and farmers. Drew is passionate about supporting local farmers, educating our community about agriculture, and giving back whenever he can.

**Jeremy Fruth**, a resident of Wayne Township, is seeking re-election as a Supervisor of the Butler Soil and Water Conservation District. Jeremy is a production grain and cattle farmer, farming 1,200 acres consisting of corn, soybeans, wheat, and hay. He has been long affiliated with Miami University’s biology, geology, and environmental science departments, where he graduated and continues to work in research and lab development. Jeremy has installed over 10,000 feet of CRP waterway projects through the SWCD on his property. He was awarded the Joe Dudley Outstanding Conservationist, and has completed two Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans.
River Habitat Monitoring
Volunteer Opportunities

Have you ever wondered if your backyard stream is a good fish habitat? How about the stream in your nearby park? There’s a method created by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA), which looks at various components of the stream to see if it adds up to a good habitat. In June, Butler SWCD held a workshop for residents, and due heightened interest, have decided to make the training available online.

What makes a healthy stream habitat?

A natural stream channel does not flow in a straight line; it meanders. Rivers meander as they flow because this pattern releases the kinetic energy of the water in the most even or uniform manner. Meanders also provide a variety of habitats for many species of plants and animals. Pools, riffles, undercut banks and snags (fallen limbs or small log piles) all provide different types of habitat. The more types of habitat present in a stream system, the greater the potential for aquatic plant and animal diversity. A uniformly straight or deep channel provides less potential habitat than a stream with variable flows and depths.

When we monitor the habitat, we look at the following:

- River bottom: how big are the rocks, and are they covered in silt or mud?
- Fish cover: are there lots of hiding places for fish, like fallen trees, deep pools, and overhanging vegetation?
- Stream shape: how curvy is the channel? How natural is the channel?
- Surrounding land use: is the river shaded, is the surrounding area covered in parking lots, forest, etc.?
- Water movement: how deep is the river and how fast does the water flow?

The training materials are available on our website, and also that of our citizen science water monitoring group, the Butler County Stream Team.

- www.butlerswcd.org
- www.butlercountystreamteam.org

To become a habitat volunteer, training materials are available, including scoring the habitat shown in the two videos. Please contact our Education and Volunteer Specialist with any questions and copies of your score sheets. Email: whilelr@butlercountyohio.org & phone: 513-785-6666.

Farm Service Agency News

Butler/Hamilton County Farm Service Agency (FSA) has several important program deadlines approaching.

County Committee Nomination—August 3

FSA encourages all farmers and FSA program participants to take part in the Butler/Hamilton County Committee election nomination process. FSA’s county committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and local administration of federal farm programs. Any agricultural producer who participates or cooperates in an FSA program within LAA #3 may be nominated. LAA #3 is comprised of Fairfield, Hanover, Morgan, Ross, and St. Clair townships. All nomination forms for the 2020 election must be postmarked or received in the Butler/Hamilton County FSA office by August 3, 2020.

For more information on FSA county committee nomination or any of the above programs please call the Butler/Hamilton FSA office to schedule a phone appointment. The Butler/Hamilton staff would like to remind producers the office continues to be open for business by phone appointment only. Farm Service Agency: 513-642-3730.

CFAP—August 28

Producers can apply for USDA’s Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), which provides direct payments to farmers to offset impacts from the coronavirus pandemic. Applications will be accepted through August 28, 2020. An application form and a payment calculator are available online on farmers.gov/cfap.
Summer Pond Management

Our first pond visit of the year was on April 29th, unseasonably warm temperatures have allowed algae and aquatic weeds to begin growing as early as March. Fast forward to July, many small problems that have been left unchecked have suddenly become huge cases of algae or duckweed, that often covers the entire surface area of the pond. These mats of green are unsightly and often inhibit activity such as swimming, fishing, or boating.

The unfortunate part is that July really is too late to safely start a management program using chemicals. When chemicals are used they result in the sudden death of large amounts of weeds and/or algae. As this once living matter begins to decay it can pull available oxygen from the water and make it impossible for fish to breath. To keep our fish populations safe it is best to not begin a chemical management program in the summer months. With high temperatures and a lack of rainfall, the safest bet for management is to mechanically remove weeds by raking. Using large leaf rakes or special weed harvesting tools pond owners can remove a majority of the plants off of the surface and open the pond back up. Keep in mind that these issues will likely still return next year and a chemical treatment program needs to be started in late March or early April.

If you are experiencing any problems with your pond Butler SWCD will come and identify issues and make suggestions on how to correct them. Give us a call today at 513-887-3720.

Cover Crop Expectations & Reality

Cover crops have been in the spotlight for correcting water quality issues, erosion, and pest management. All of this marketing has led many farmers to believe that cover crops are a silver bullet solution to rescue their farm. Not to say that there isn't benefits from them, but just like any change to a farm operation system, there will be learning curves and challenges to overcome. Many of farmers have been asking about how to plant cover crops and increase their effectiveness. The answer is, well, it depends. It depends on if you are trying to manage weeds, increase water infiltration, decrease harmful insects, or reduce erosion. If you want to do all of those, great! The more the better, “cocktail” cover crop mixes are best for soil biology and can help many other things as well.

But the issue really arises with how the farmer is trying to plant the cover crop. Planting by drill is certainly going to get the best result, but is unreasonable when a harvest may end in late October or early November, late planted cover crops are generally not as successful. Many farmers have expressed their interest in inter-seed covers into growing crop. Aerial application is heavily reliant on soil moisture and crop maturity. At least three Butler County farmers are doing on farm innovation to broadcast cover crops while applying nitrogen. Another suggestion that seems to work well is blending cover crops with fertilizer to be spread in the fall. By combining cover crop planting with another farming practice like fertilizing or spraying we can increase efficiency and drive down costs. However, all of these methods are dependent on soil moisture and seed to soil contact.

Again, no single solution is going to work the same on every operation, soil type, or cover crop species. Butler SWCD is beginning a YouTube video series where we visit different local farmers and talk about what, why, and how they are doing cover crops. Check us out at www.youtube.com/user/butlerswcd. If you would like to be featured in a video give us a call!

We invite you to attend our cover crop field day on August 20th to learn more about cover crop species and how farmers are tackling these issues with on the farm innovation.
Build Your Own Rain Barrel

Rain barrels are a great addition to any garden. They provide a source of water for your garden that is free of chlorine and fluoride, which is often added to municipal water. You can purchase pre-made rain barrels, such as the ones Butler SWCD sells, or those that can be found at many big box stores and garden centers. You can also build your own. You could purchase a bunch of plumbing materials and go at it alone, but we prefer to use kits that provide all the needed materials.

Butler SWCD has used the EarthMinded DIY converter kits since before our first rain barrel workshop in 2012. Much like the one’s still sold in our online web store.

One main reason to utilize the DIY converter kit is that it creates a closed rain barrel. This is important as a closed system provides no opening that allow mosquitoes to enter and breed. Open barrel systems, unless they use extremely fine screens, can become overrun by mosquito larvae.

DIY kits allow you to choose the container that you will turn into a rain barrel. Some people use a simple plastic 60 gallon drum, but for those wanting to collect a lot of water, you can use a kit along with a large square utility tank that can come in sizes from 100-1,000 gallons. This is great as one inch of rainfall falling on a 1,000 square foot roof produces 600 gallons of water.

The DIY kits are easy to use, we have created a simple step-by-step video available on our YouTube Channel www.youtube.com/user/Butlerswcd.

If you are interested in purchasing a DIY kit, please visit our website at www.butlerswcd.org/shop

Important to note: Rain barrels are not illegal in Ohio. We hear this from people every time we are at an event. They are illegal in some states such as Colorado due to water rights issues, but are perfectly legal here in Ohio.

Upcoming Events:

Butler Environmental Stewardship Team:

Be one of the BEST and join Butler Soil and Water for a few conservation volunteer days. Throughout the upcoming months we plan to remove honeysuckle, manage a rain garden, and clean up a river.

- **August 25**—Rain garden cleanup, West Chester
- **September 24**—Honeysuckle removal, Middletown
- **October 24**—Clean Sweep of the Great Miami River multiple locations to choose from.

Pollinator Series

At this point, we are unsure on whether this class will be held in person at our building, or if it will be offered online. Please check our website and social media sites as the date draws closer, or you can contact our office.

**September 16 (7—9 pm)**
Find out about Ohio’s bees. Know what you are looking at: butterflies, moths, and skippers. What are some great host plants for caterpillars? Meet the pollinator garden pests. Lessons on how to successfully grow from seed.

**Registration:** Please call 513-887-3720 or email butlerswcd@butlercountyohio.org to register for this free series.

Let’s Get Social

While we’re sure you enjoy reading through our district newsletter, perhaps you want more information more often? You can find us in several locations in the world of social media. The Butler Soil and Water Conservation District has a Facebook page, an Instagram account, and also a YouTube account. Our staff does their best to keep up-to-date information provided on events or workshops taking place. We also utilize the platforms to provide educational videos as well as activities for our followers.

We’re always looking for ways to provide resources and tools that residents would be interested in, but if you have thoughts or suggestions please reach out to us.

Give us a follow on our social media accounts:
* www.youtube.com/user/ButlerSWCD
* www.facebook.com/ButlerSWCD
* www.instagram.com/ButlerSWCD
Butler SWCD

**Mission:** To promote the conservation, restoration, and responsible use of our natural resources through technical assistance and education.

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Want to Sponsor our Newsletter?
Contact our office today (513) 887-3720
Cover Crop Field Day

Date: Thursday, August 20th
Time: 10AM—3PM
Location: SWCD Office
1802 Princeton Road, Hamilton
Free

Join Butler Soil and Water Conservation District for our first ever cover crop field day. Participants will have the opportunity to tour 8 different cover crop plots, participate in a panel discussion, and hear from industry experts on cover crop benefits and usage.

Please bring your own lawn chair, masks are required and in order to comply with state requirements we ask that you kindly practice social distancing.

Lunch will be provided—we ask that you please RSVP, so we have enough lunches ordered. Call 513-887-3720 or email smithbe@butlercountyohio.org.

Clean Sweep of the Great Miami River Bonus Date

Each year, Butler SWCD and many partners hold the Clean Sweep of the Great Miami River on Make a Difference Day, which falls on Saturday, October 24, 2020. This year, we are looking at an additional cleanup day in September. This bonus cleanup day will take place on the water with the use of kayaks and canoes. If you are interested in being a part of this cleanup, please add your name and email to our form at https://tinyurl.com/y4rwfaea

We will send you the details and registration information once we have it confirmed.

You can find out more about the river cleanup at www.cleansweepofthegreatmiamiriver.org/